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**Items for information: Coordination and integration of
statistical programmes**

Work of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report summarizes the main conclusions of the seventh and eighth sessions of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities, held in New York on 6 March 2006 and in Montreal, Canada, on 4 and 5 September 2006, respectively. The Statistical Commission may wish to take into account the views of the Committee in its discussions under relevant agenda items.

* E/CN.3/2007/1.



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I. Introduction

1. The Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA) was established in September 2002, to continue carrying out functions previously performed by the Administrative Committee on Coordination Subcommittee on Statistical Activities. The main objectives of CCSA are to promote coordination among the statistical programmes of international organizations, to provide coordinated outputs for the treatment of statistical issues in intergovernmental meetings, including the United Nations Statistical Commission, to foster good practices in the structuring and programming of statistical activities in international organizations and, ultimately, to achieve through coordination activities an integrated system for data collection.

2. In 2006, CCSA, chaired by the International Labour Organization, held two sessions: its seventh session in New York on 6 March 2006, and its eighth session in Montreal, Canada, on 4 and 5 September 2006 (see annex for participants).

II. Work of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities

A. International quality assurance frameworks

3. At its seventh session, Eurostat reported the first results of the surveys of quality frameworks and quality reporting mechanisms. The full report, by Eurostat, with the results and recommendations for future work, was presented at the eighth session in September 2006. The Committee discussed the proposed action plan for the second phase of the project. It was agreed that the Committee would not formally adopt one common framework for use by all agencies for quality assurance, but Eurostat would continue to prepare guidelines on the development of a quality assurance framework for the use of those agencies wishing to adopt one. The guidelines would include examples of best practices and focus on implementation.

B. Implementation of the Principles for statistical activities in international organizations

4. At its eighth session, the Committee reviewed and discussed the proposals on ways to assess the implementation of the Principles presented by the United Nations Statistics Division. It agreed on the following: (a) all members who are committed to do so should review their practices in the light of the Principles and provide a self-assessment of their implementation using a common template. A report based on the agencies' self-assessment will be presented at the 2008 session of the Statistical Commission; (b) the Committee will not invite countries to assess agencies' compliance with the Principles, although countries are obviously welcome to initiate the assessment and table-specific issues related to the Principles and their implementation; (c) agencies will be able to use a peer review mechanism, in which an agency volunteers to have its practices reviewed by other members; and (d) review of agencies' practices will be a standing item in the agenda of the

Committee at every session, although there will be no formal reconciliation mechanisms.

5. The Committee further agreed to continue the work already undertaken on the three priority areas for action, namely: (a) the development of quality assurance frameworks; (b) Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX); and (c) training initiatives for the staff of international organizations. The Principles were also presented to the High-level Committee on Programmes at its meeting in September 2006 and will be brought to the attention of agencies' senior management and subregional organizations.

C. Statistical training for the staff of international agencies

6. The proposed action plan on training in statistics for the staff of international organizations, prepared by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), was discussed at the seventh session of the Committee. At its eighth session, the Committee reviewed progress made and discussed the objectives and action plan of the newly developed CCSA training website, developed by IMF and the United Nations Statistics Division. Agencies were encouraged to provide and regularly update the information on courses offered by their organization and to consult the website to identify suitable courses for their own staff.

D. Implementation plan of SDMX

7. At the seventh session of the Committee, the SDMX sponsors reported that version 2 of the SDMX technical standards were ready to be submitted to the International Organization for Standardization for approval and that the initiative was moving towards the draft content oriented guidelines. The guidelines, to be used by statisticians when exchanging data and metadata, would be posted on the SDMX website. The Committee agreed that the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, in collaboration with the six partner agencies, would develop the implementation plan to be presented at the next session. In September 2006, the plan was presented by the SDMX sponsors, setting out ways for CCSA to facilitate the implementation of SDMX, in particular how international organizations can use SDMX concepts and tools for their exchange of data and metadata, both with national data providers and among themselves. The report also proposed a framework for the development of specific subject matter nomenclatures and structures and the improvement of existing ones.

8. At its eighth session, the Committee also agreed that additional information was needed before requesting the United Nations Statistical Commission to commend the goals and progress of the SDMX initiative, to recognize the importance of a wide use of SDMX standards for the exchange of statistical data and metadata among international statistical agencies and to encourage Member States to participate in further developments. The Committee agreed that a final version of a note presenting information on how Member States and international organizations could contribute to content-oriented guidelines in specific subject matter domains would be agreed upon by CCSA after its circulation to all members. The note was prepared by the SDMX sponsors, circulated and noted by members by the CCSA secretariat in November 2006.

F. Coordination of technical cooperation activities

9. In conjunction with its eighth session, CCSA held a special session on statistical capacity-building at which it discussed ways to improve inter-agency coordination of capacity-building activities and technical assistance to countries. It also reviewed ways to increase the sharing of information on ongoing and planned events, projects and programmes.

10. Participants agreed that more work was needed for CCSA to agree on specific recommendations on various issues related to the coordination of statistical capacity-building efforts. The Committee endorsed the proposal by the United Nations Statistics Division of forming four task teams to further this work, as follows:

(a) Task team 1: Reporting mechanisms on statistical capacity-building activities, led by PARIS21 (the Economic Commission for Europe, Eurostat, World Tourism Organization, World Bank, PAHO);

(b) Task team 2: Capacity-building through regional training initiatives for national statisticians (and regional training centres), led by the United Nations Statistics Division (International Labour Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, PARIS21);

(c) Task team 3: Review of modalities for the coordination of technical cooperation programmes at the subregional level, led by the World Bank (United Nations Statistics Division, Eurostat, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, African Development Bank, World Tourism Organization);

(d) Task team 4: Assessment of the effectiveness of capacity-building activities in Africa, led by the United Nations Statistics Division (WHO, PARIS21, World Bank, African Development Bank).

11. Task team leaders circulated the proposed terms of reference for their respective teams and will report to the tenth session of the Committee in September 2007.

F. Country regional grouping and coding

12. At the seventh session, the World Trade Organization proposed that the Committee consider the issue of regional country grouping and coding. The concerns raised by the World Trade Organization included: the need for transparency and consistency in the countries and regions nomenclature; and whether or not there is a need for harmonization across agencies or only for transparency and the creation of a registry. The Committee agreed that this is an important topic and that it should be addressed; as a first step, CCSA would look at the work already done in some forums to harmonize classifications.

13. Two reports were presented to the Committee: one prepared by the World Trade Organization, presenting a summary of discussions of the inter-agency Task Force on International Merchandise Trade Statistics on enhancing transparency and coherence in geo-nomenclatures based on experiences of country coding drawn from the successful implementation by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the United Nations Statistics Division of their joint trade data

processing system; and one prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, describing practices with country coding and regional grouping and the adaptation of these regional aggregates to the requirements of Millennium Development Goal monitoring and reporting.

14. After reviewing various issues concerning both practices on country coding and different regional groupings used by agencies, the Committee agreed to focus work on expanding the country coding to meet the needs for data and metadata exchange among member agencies. It was agreed that agencies would submit to the United Nations Statistics Division their concerns and questions related to aggregations or disaggregations of countries and territories not currently covered by its Standard Country or Area Codes for Statistical Use. The United Nations Statistics Division would review the requests and propose additional coding to be used consistently by all members for data and metadata exchange.

15. On the more complex issue of discrepancies in regional classifications used by member agencies, it was agreed that decisions should be left to inter-agency groups working on specific themes/projects, such as the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Millennium Development Goal Indicators.

G. Review of Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities functions

16. The Committee took note of a document on the history of CCSA and current functions, prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division. The Committee agreed that the United Nations Statistics Division and the chairman, in collaboration with other agencies interested in contributing to the exercise, will prepare a proposal on how to improve the way CCSA operates for discussion at its ninth session. The proposal would include issues such as the duration of the sessions, the role of the Secretariat and the chairman, the structure of the discussion and duration and modalities of special sessions.

H. Discussion on the report by the Friends of the Chair on Millennium Development Goal Indicators

17. At its seventh session, the Committee reviewed the report by the Friends of the Chair on Millennium Development Goal Indicators and discussed ways to respond to the issues raised by the report. It was remarked that the focus of the report had shifted from issues of capacity-building in countries to the ways data are estimated and compiled by international agencies. It was also remarked that according to the original intent of the process for the global monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals, international agencies had been tasked with producing estimates at the regional and global level only. For those reasons, it was pointed out that CCSA should respond to the issues raised. The Committee took note of several suggestions by members on how to address such issues, including: applying the SDMX standards and ensuring adherence by agencies to the Principles for Statistical Activities in International Organizations. The Committee recognized the concerns of countries on the imputation of figures by international agencies and on the quality of data disseminated by the agencies, while at the same time emphasizing the need for statistical capacity-building in countries.

Annex**Participating agencies and offices****Seventh Meeting of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (New York, 6 March 2006)****United Nations entities and programmes**

Department of Economic and Social Affairs
 United Nations Statistics Division
 United Nations Population Division
 Economic Commission for Africa
 Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
 Economic Commission for Europe
 Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
 Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
 United Nations Children's Fund
 United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
 United Nations Development Programme
 United Nations Population Fund

United Nations and other specialized agencies

International Labour Organization
 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
 Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization
 World Bank
 International Monetary Fund
 United Nations Industrial Development Organization
 World Trade Organization
 International Telecommunication Union

Other international and non-governmental organizations

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
 Eurostat
 Inter-State Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States
 Bank for International Settlements
 African Development Bank
 European Central Bank

PARIS21

ECOWAS

Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics

CARICOM

**Eighth Meeting of the Committee for the Coordination of
Statistical Activities (Montreal, Canada, 4-5 September 2006)**

United Nations entities programmes and funds

Department of Economic and Social Affairs

United Nations Statistics Division

Economic Commission for Europe

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

United Nations Development Programme

Specialized agencies and related organizations

International Labour Organization

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

World Health Organization/PAHO

World Bank

International Monetary Fund

United Nations Industrial Development Organization

World Tourism Organization

World Trade Organization

International Telecommunication Union

Other international and non-governmental organizations

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

Eurostat

Bank for International Settlements

African Development Bank

European Central Bank

PARIS21

Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries